

HOW THE DOPE FIEND PLAYS TAG WITH UNCLE SAM

The Underworld Keeps Itself Supplied With Drugs Through Many Devious Channels, of Which "Willie the Wraith" Is An Important Factor.

PROCEEDING by a series of impulses that materialized in disconnected jerks, "Willie the Wrath" moved with caution through the street. Afternoon sunshine glided the pavement, but close to buildings was purple shade, and The Wrath kept to the shade, shrinking toward backways, stopping occasionally to snatch backward glances.

Though his feet shuffled just a bit he lifted them high. Wasn't life coursing through his veins—wonderful, rose-hued, comprehensive life? Under a gusty hat brim his eyes burned, grotesquely lighting a face like a death's head, with gray skin stretched over the bones. Gray skin and shadows under the cheeks and thin blue lips drawn against ragged teeth. The Wrath was not a lovely being.

Up the street and round a certain corner a shabby, shaky building lurches toward the lake. There's a drug store in one end and a dim stairway, better known to the police than to the public, leads to a second floor. The door is ajar and slouched like a shadow against the dirty wall. The death's head tipped, lifting its eyes to a point on the horizon. He dreamed, nonchalantly, almost jauntily. Only his finger tips moved. Hands pressed against his sides, tight, tight, so they began to begain clothes, and strained along the thumbs and across the palms, ceaselessly, as though they were part of a machine.

Someone stirred in the gloom above the stairs. A foot, laid on a creaking board, was removed hastily; a sharp breath was exhaled, as though from tortured lungs. The Wraith might have been a graven image, excepting that a muscle at the side of his lips quivered, jerked, and set up a waving vibration.

There was no other sound; yet The Wraith's consciousness strained toward the person who moved down the stairway.

That person was creeping along, balancing on hands and feet, stopping sometimes to lie full length. He was crouching now like a dog at The Wrath's feet, shaking and sobbing. The Wrath's lips meered, but his eyes never shifted from the point on the horizon. Then his finger tips, steadied on a crumpled note; steadied, flashed, released a bit of newspaper, and doubled again across his palm, back and forth, over and over, as though they were part of a machine.

The person who crouched on the stairs fumbled at the catch on a little case. But the catch was tiny and his fingers, dancing crazily, refused to touch the spring. With a snarl not to be recognized as the expression of a human being, he tore at the newspaper, and with both hands carried it to his mouth, biting, choking.

"Shut up, can't you?" growled The Wraith.

"Ah-h-h!" It was the sigh with which life passes death. The fantastic contortion of muscles ceased; sobs struggled and died; the man rose slowly, swaying a little. And his eyes burned in a face grotesquely like a death's head.

"God!" he whispered, sliding into the street.

A man dressed inconspicuously in black walked soft-footedly past the stairway. When the clock in the drug store window showed the quarter hour he walked back again, slowly. And though The Wrath's eyes stared at the point on the horizon, a wry smile twisted new shadows into his face.

"Hub, Mr. Plain Clo'es Man, how'd d' do?" he muttered.

ITS the latest game invented by crime to carry on its own existence—playing tag with Uncle Sam. So far Mr. Plain Clothes Man and his allies have been "it," and Willie The Wraith, knowing how much chance he's running of being caught, slinks in the shadows and smiles. Despite the stringent Harrison law, which says that yesterday: to-day, he felt the exhilaration of it fire his blood; tomorrow he will not be without it. He's making money, too; Charlie Fan-Tan and "The Light of Asia" are willing to pay fabulous sums for "just a pinch of happy-dust, of pal!"

God knows where they get the money,
the ragged, loathsome beasta. But can

one be a soft fool when one has a "yum" to satisfy? Of course discovery means a little loss of the sense of being alive—here, the fire's another dog in that pump! Ah! The fools—the interfering dogs—did they think they were a match for a brain sharpened by this? Whose business is it? They've never felt this point of fire just above the elbow and the tingle, have they? Do they know anything about this numbing happiness stealing, stealing?


Let them live their lives; Lady Opium will take care of her own!

Mr. Plafie Clothes Man may be leading a miserable life in consequence. But in a bit of an office at the Cleveland Central police station is someone who understands the game, who is working a little bit of a little between the dope habit and its victims. He is Police Prosecutor Samuel H. Silbert, who now holds the record in the United States for convictions of traffickers in drugs. Trailing down criminals is more than a part of his duty, to Silbert. It's a hobby and a chief interest. He has a record of 1,000 convictions on open books to the trust for hunting evidence and developing cases. Of 250 jury cases handled by Silbert in the last year, there were 249 convictions; the other ended in disagreement.

Along Cleveland's "coke alley," where, despite laws and stringent police supervision, the sale of drugs still goes on, and Silbert's name is spoken with respect, for he is said to be able to find a grain of dope if it's to be found by anybody. He doesn't search usual hiding places; he's the one who discovers secret springs, traps in floors, hollow places in solid looking walls. They come into his office, too, the white and shaking "jabbers" and the "eaters" and tell him their tales.

Few others have managed to elicit their secrets; Silbert learns, why, and how and where they obtain their supply. And as it's done in Cleveland, says he, it's done in Philadelphia, and Pittsburg, and the cities of the south and east.

WITH the advent of the Harrison law, drug users and drug sellers realized that importation would be difficult and as a result prices would be higher. With cunning never exhibited by any other class of criminals, the drug sellers made arrangements to duck under the arm of the law, and the users prepared to pay for their trouble.



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Before the Harrison law, smoking opium sold in New York for \$6 to \$10 a tin of six ounces. A "toy of hop," the trade name for the shell of the lichee nut, used as a measure for small quantities of opium, was purchasable for \$1. Today a six-ounce tin of opium costs from \$35 to \$55. One transaction was made recently by which three six-ounce tins of Lai Yuen, the finest smoking opium, sold for \$15,000 cash, and the purchaser admitted that in retelling the drug he expected to realize a profit of \$3,000.

Before hard times hit the drug trade cocaine could be purchased at \$3 an ounce; a "deck" of cocaine sold for a quarter. Today it sells at \$22 per ounce, while a "deck" sells at \$4.50. An eight-ounce bottle of morphine sulphate, formerly selling for \$1.25, now brings \$7.50, and morphine tablets once sold at "six bits" now sell at \$7.50.

METHODS devised by dope peddlers, helping along by the drug-inducible cunning of the hop head's brain, for getting supplies into the city and to the user stand alone for craftiness and far-sightedness, according to Silbert. Drugs are brought into Cleveland from Toledo, Detroit and Buffalo, he says, and to take the place of the drug factories in Europe, from which peddlers have been accustomed to obtain their supplies. A syndicate has been established in Texas, where crude opium "run" into this country from South American ports is being transformed into smoking opium, morphine and heroin.

Cocaine is also being made there. It is a simple thing for agents sent out of northern cities to meet agents from these factories and return with drugs, undetected. Stopping the importation of drugs will not stop the traffic unless every port in the country is closed and every foot of the borderland watched, Silbert says.

"Once in the city," he goes on, "the matter of getting the drugs to users is to be considered. To the ordinary mind the illicit trade is carried on in those sections of cities set apart and recognized as 'questionable.' This is not true. Transactions take place in the residence districts—in the business districts—and it's

not only the underworld that takes part. Many of the sellers are men and women who do not use drugs themselves, but who, for the sake of dollars, will not balk at any trade.

"There's a certain small tailor on 'Suits Presued While You Wait' a block far from a principal business street in Cleveland. Certain customers who wear their clothing there pay from \$2 to \$10 to get a suit made, and it's astonishing how much pride some of them apparently take in having their clothing neatly created. Not only men, but women, patronize that shop. And if you could stop the tailor's delivery man and search a suit he was carrying you'd learn the reason. Hidden away in some pocket, or sewed into a seam, you'd find an inconspicuous packet of pills for the opium, heroin, morphine or cocaine, depending upon the taste of the customer, though often it used much more. It requires a 'saw,' which is too easily found by honest investigators.

"There's a popular candy store in our neighborhood. You'll be away from twenty to forty cents for a box of candy. The next customer will pay from \$5 to \$10 for a box exactly similar to the outward appearances. Buy one of the special boxes if you can. Carefully remove the chocolate coating from each piece of candy, and some of the bon-bons will be filled with morphine or heroin tablets or capsules."

"It's surprising to learn what can be purchased in the toe of a pair of shoes in the corner of a neatly furnished parlor in some little stores.

"Another way of killing a year off the help of patent medicines. Each remedy contains much opium and I'm not used to who has a much a day, the 'kick' there is. But it's a cold, and day after day slide up to a number of his friends all know the earmarks. They can 'get a little something.' They're brought into my office carrying it in their hair, in their belts, sewed into their clothes. They're a shame-wrecked, dependable lot, with no sense of accepting to each other."

"It's not alone in the business world that brains beguile cunning which has schemed the law and offset the effects of its demands its payment. And, in state business, it is the owner who must pay the bill."